

## Constantine

To sum up. The only reasonable view to take of the religious character of Constantine is that he was a sincere and convinced Christian. This is borne out alike by his passionate professions of faith and by the clear testimony of his actions. There are, it is true, many historians who hold that he was really indifferent to religion, and others who credit him with an easy capacity for finding truth in all religions alike. Professor Bury, for example, says that "the evidence seems to shew that his religion was a syncretistic monotheism; that he was content to see the deity in the Sun, in Mithras, or in the God of the Hebrews." Such a description would suit the character of Constantius Chlorus perfectly, and it may very well have suited Constantine himself before the overthrow of Maxentius. There is a passage in the Ninth Panegyric which seems to have been uttered by one holding these views, and it is worth quotation, for it is an invocation to the supreme deity to bless the Emperor Constantine. It runs as follows:

Wherefore we pray and beseech thee to keep our Prince safe for all eternity, thee, the supreme creator of all things, whose names are as manifold as it has been thy will that nations should have tongues. We cannot tell by what title it is thy pleasure that we should address thee, whether thou art a divine force and mind permeating the whole world and mingled with all the elements, and moving of thine own motive power without impulse from without, or whether thou art some Power above all Heaven who lookest down upon this handiwork from some loftier arch of Nature.